

The Causes, Effects, and Interventions of Workplace Emotional Exhaustion

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Abstract: Emotional exhaustion is an unhealthy psychological state produced by individuals in the workplace. It is very common in the workplace. Emotional exhaustion that is not dealt with in time will produce adverse impacts on the work and daily life of individuals in the workplace. This study summarizes the causes, effects, and interventions that affect workplace emotional exhaustion by analyzing the research on workplace emotional exhaustion in the past three years. The results show that: personal characteristics, interpersonal relationships, and work itself are important factors that lead to emotional exhaustion of individuals in the workplace. Emotional exhaustion will lead to the decline of individual self-efficacy and work performance in the workplace, which will lead to the decline of organizational commitment and an increase in turnover intention. Correct career choices, work mindfulness training, and necessary psychological disengagement can help alleviate the emotional exhaustion state of professionals. This research helps workplace individuals realize that they are in a state of emotional exhaustion in time, and take corrective measures to intervene in time to minimize the adverse effects of emotional exhaustion.

Keywords: Workplace, Emotional exhaustion, Intervention

1. Introduction

Emotional exhaustion refers to the feeling that an individual's emotional resources are exhausted and is the result of a mismatch between high job demands and low personal resources. Emotionally exhausted people experience chronic fatigue due to work-related factors, develop a range of negative mental health states such as impaired self-esteem, depression, tension, and short temper, and may experience social withdrawal. Distrust of others, strong feelings of powerlessness, and physical reactions such as digestive system, sleep problems, etc., their mental and emotional resources are often overused, and the emotional and energy resources needed to deal with tasks that related to workplace are lacking, eventually lead to their own emotions have to be in a state of exhaustion [1]. Emotional exhaustion is regarded as an essential part of workplace emotional burnout, which can make workplace individuals feel physically and mentally exhausted and run out of fuel under the pressure of work. According to research, "Emotional exhaustion refers to an extreme feeling state, and even small amounts of this stress experienced a few times a month may be noteworthy" [2].

Emotional exhaustion in the workplace is an unhealthy psychological state. Almost every individual in the workplace will experience different degrees of emotional exhaustion at different times, places, and occasions. However, it is worth noting that individuals in the workplace often do not realize that they are in a state of emotional exhaustion and fail to intervene in time, thus allowing the deterioration of the emotional exhaustion state, which will eventually hurt their work. The purpose of this paper is to comprehensively analyze workplace emotional exhaustion, discussing the causes of workplace emotional exhaustion, the impact of emotional exhaustion, and the measures that should be taken when facing a state of emotional exhaustion. This research is helpful to trigger the individual's attention and deep thinking on emotional exhaustion in the workplace.

2. What Causes Emotional Exhaustion

There are three reasons for the emotional exhaustion of individuals in the workplace, including personal characteristics, interpersonal relationships, and the work itself [2].

The degree of emotional exhaustion of individuals in the workplace is different under different personality traits. Research indicates that people with high neuroticism have a higher degree of experiencing emotional exhaustion. When faced with work difficulties, neurotic individuals will have intense mental anxiety, and work engagement will lead to exhaustion. Due to the combined effect of innate temperament and acquired upbringing factors, the personality of neurotic individuals is mostly characterized by anxiety, self-suppression, self-denial, and subjective imagination, which is more likely to produce work rumination behavior, which directly leads to emotional exhaustion [3]. On the contrary, highly responsible workplace individuals are not prone to emotional exhaustion. Although work engagement can lead to emotional exhaustion, due diligence, achievement, self-discipline, prudence, and restraint can help them perform their work better without being exhausted. Individuals with high conscientiousness have high emotional stability, and work engagement can effectively reduce emotional exhaustion and reduce their counterproductive work behaviors. Workplace individuals with high agreeableness traits have a considerable degree of self-compassion, view workplace difficulties as a common workplace experience and rationalize them internally, and are not overwhelmed by the negative emotions and emotions that come with their mind, thereby reducing emotional exhaustion, this positive attitude can help them reduce pain in the face of adversity [4].

Interpersonal relationships can affect the emotional exhaustion of individuals in the workplace. As social animals, human beings have social needs for social interaction and maintaining close relationships [5]. For individuals, the time spent in the workplace accounts for more than half of all life events, and a workplace is also an important place for individuals to find and meet their necessary social needs. Studies have shown that rudeness and ridicule in the workplace bring about a broad range of negative emotional outcomes, such as psychological distress, negative emotions, feelings of exclusion, etc., at the same time, being censured or undervalued by others (eg, supervisors, co-workers, family members, and clients) can be emotionally exhausting for individuals in the workplace, which in turn leads to emotional exhaustion [4]. Workplace exclusion is identified as the degree to which employees feel neglected or excepted by other members of the workplace, it is a type of social exclusion and is a negative phenomenon commonly found in the workplace. Workplace harassment is more serious, which is a kind of spiritual attack that will have a lasting pessimistic impact on individuals in the workplace [6]. Studies have shown that the higher the degree of workplace incivility and workplace exclusion experienced by workplace individuals, the higher the degree of emotional exhaustion, this situation does not differ due to differences in the emotional intelligence of individuals in the workplace, because in a highly abusive atmosphere, the mitigation effect of individual emotional intelligence on emotional exhaustion in the workplace will be inhibited [4,7].

Work itself is also an important factor affecting individual emotional exhaustion in the workplace. New entrants to the workforce are more likely to experience emotional exhaustion. When workplace

individuals have sufficient emotional flexibility, they can effectively harness all of their emotions and act in the way they most want. However, as newcomers to the workplace, they are eager to be recognized and accepted, and they will feel that they may be misunderstood as having insufficient workability for any mistakes that occur at work. This worry reduces emotional sensitivity, increases obedience, and is more prone to emotional exhaustion. Further, the job demand-resource (JD-R) model states that work demands have a physical or psychological cost to the individual, while not all requirements in work are damaging, however, when individuals pay a lot of effort beyond normal working hours to meet these work requirements and do not get the necessary adjustment and rest in time, such work needs will become the pressure felt by individuals in the workplace and such work-related stressors can lead to a higher degree of emotional exhaustion in individuals in the workplace[8].

3. What Are the Effects of Emotional Exhaustion

Emotional exhaustion leads to lower workplace self-efficacy. Resource Conservation Theory points out, the resource pool of individuals in the workplace is limited, and emotional exhaustion will lead to the loss of individual resources [9].

When individuals in the workplace experience emotional exhaustion, their work attitude is perfunctory, the quality of work declines, and the work process is troubled and confused, and cannot make up for the lost resources through active workplace training and learning. In the long run, this working state will lead to the inability of individuals in the workplace to make correct subjective judgments about whether they can complete a certain job, and their confidence in whether they can complete the work objectives on time and with high quality will be reduced, and they will easily retreat when faced with setbacks, the reduced self-efficacy will further exacerbate the emotional exhaustion of individuals in the workplace. Emotional exhaustion can lead to a decline in individual work performance workplace. The higher the level of emotional exhaustion of individuals in the workplace, the less motivation and ability to complete tasks independently, and the lowermost of the workplace hierarchy but no motivation to climb upwards [10]. At the same time, emotional exhaustion can lead to cognitive difficulties for individuals in the workplace. Individuals with high emotional exhaustion in the workplace will have reduced attention and memory when performing work tasks, cannot complete the set work tasks within the specified deadline, and may further cause work accidents. In addition, modern social exchange theory argues that social exchange relationships often involve the exchange of social-emotional benefits, when individuals seek their ideal organization and voluntarily form a social-emotional exchange relationship with it, they tend to exhibit positive organizational citizenship behavior, better job performance, and lower turnover intention and expect equal emotional benefits in return in an equal and fair manner [11]. However, when there are incentives such as excessive work pressure in the organization that lead to emotional exhaustion of individuals in the workplace, individuals in the workplace will think that the organization is unfair, violate the social exchange contract in their hearts, and then reduce organizational commitment, obstructing the normal social exchange relationship between workplace individuals and organizations, resulting in reduced work performance and increased turnover intentions for workplace individuals [12].

4. How to Deal with Emotional Exhaustion

First of all, individuals in the workplace should choose a job that they love and are willing to do for a long time. Choosing such a job can help individuals perceive their intrinsic motivation, highly overlap work goals with personal goals, build them into an internally driven work method, Increase one's professional identity and workplace mentality, have a sense of mission for one's work, focus

more on the work itself during the work process, reduce the negative impact of interference factors outside work on oneself, and thus reduce the number of workplace individuals. Possibility of emotional exhaustion, maintaining a relatively good working state [13,14].

Secondly, if workplace individuals are unable to freely choose their jobs, consciously training themselves in work mindfulness can also help workplace individuals reduce emotional exhaustion. Mindfulness is defined as “a conscious, non-judgmental, attention to the present moment”, and work mindfulness training emphasizes the non-judgmental acceptance of negative factors at work by individuals in the workplace, their imperfections, and everything else unfriendly to oneself, only focus limited energy on the "single-point" state of the current task and devote to providing work efficiency and work input, deal with negative emotions in a more tolerant and peaceful state of mind and way, and actively relieve emotional exhaustion through mindful thinking [15]. Studies have shown that work mindfulness training can bring about the cognitive and behavioral flexibility of individuals in the workplace, as well as the re-perception and change of emotions, and can help individuals in the workplace to better adapt to the environment and cope with changes [16].

Finally, if individuals in the workplace cannot choose their jobs and cannot train themselves effective mindfulness, psychological disengagement is also a temporary and effective method. Psychological disengagement refers to the fact that employees stop thinking about anything related to work during non-working hours, it is a transfer strategy for coping with stress [17]. Any information, devoted to other activities or thinking, such as fitness, painting, chatting with friends, etc., can help individuals in the workplace to get rid of work in time, get a short rest and energy recovery, disperse stress, and be beneficial to the workplace. Individuals relieve negative emotions and reduce emotional exhaustion.

5. Conclusion

This review summarizes the causes, effects, and interventions of emotional exhaustion in the workplace by analyzing the literature in related fields. In terms of causes, personality, interpersonal relationships and work are important influencing factors. Specifically, in the workplace, individuals with high neuroticism tend to be more likely to enter a state of emotional exhaustion, while individuals with high conscientiousness and high agreeableness are more likely to be in a positive emotional state. Encountering workplace rejection and other bad interpersonal relationships and problems in the work itself will lead to a significant degree of emotional exhaustion. In terms of negative effects, emotional exhaustion can lead to lower self-efficacy, and lower job performance. In terms of intervention, workplace individuals can respond and intervene by making effective career choices, forcing themselves to work on mindfulness training and effective psychological disengagement. Overall, this paper helps to identify emotional states in the workplace and provides strategies to effectively improve emotional exhaustion.

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